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***The Museum of the History of
Cypriot Coinage of the Cyprus
Bank Cultural Foundation
(From a coin collection to a
museum)***

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The Museum of the History of Cypriot Coinage of the Cyprus Bank Cultural Foundation (From a coin collection to a museum)

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The Museum of the History of Cypriot Coinage began as a small numismatics collection belonging to the Bank of Cyprus. When the Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation was set up in 1984, it inherited the coin collection.

This small numismatic collection included a bronze coin of the Roman period which had been donated by the Chairman of the Bank's Board of Directors (1955-1963). The coin carries the inscription KOINON KY_PI_N (The Community of the Cypriots) within a wreath. To this date, this ancient symbol of a Pancyprian League serves as the logo of the Bank of Cyprus, the largest private banking institution of the island.

Since 1984 the Cultural Foundation has developed an appreciable collection of specimens which spans the entire spectrum of Cypriot coinage, from the earliest types struck in the island in the 6th century BC to the first coins issued by the Republic of Cyprus in 1960 until today. The coin collection, before its permanent exhibition in the Museum, was exhibited in Athens in 1991, in Nicosia in 1992 and in Paris in 1994. These exhibitions were accompanied by catalogues and lectures.

THE MUSEUM

The Museum was inaugurated on September 1995 and it is situated on the ground floor of the Bank of Cyprus administrative headquarters in Nicosia. Two thousand and six hundred years of turbulent Cypriot history come alive through four hundred and twenty nine (429) coins divided into nine chronological sections and exhibited in 21 display cases. The presentation begins with coinage from the Cyprus City-Kingdoms (6th-4th century BC), covers the Hellenistic period (332-30 BC), the Roman period (30 BC-330 AD), the Byzantine period (330-1191) and the Lusignan Kingdom (1192-1489). It extends to the Venetian period (1489-1571), the Ottoman Rule (1571-1878), British Administration (1878-1960) and ends with the Republic of Cyprus (1960).

The arrangement inside the display cases (FIG. 1) and the presentation of the exhibits were conceived in such a way to facilitate viewing by all visitors including children. Every display case has enlarged photographs of the specimens, simple historical texts and detailed visual material of the period.

At the entrance to the museum, there is an interactive «*Roptron*» information station with a touch screen. Images of all coins of the collection have been entered into the station computer, through a special scanning process of the actual coins. Different scenaria are created, through hypothetical electronic tours of the museum by the viewer, with successive creation of screens. These scenaria include presentations of the coins by chronological order, by ruler or king who issued the coins, by mint, by display case and by theme depicted on coins. The programme is capable of sound reproductions, and includes moving images and explanatory texts. Currently two versions of the programme are available, Greek and English.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE MUSEUM

The acquisition of new specimens that enrich and broaden our collection is a constant effort and it is always preceded by scientific research. We purchase from authorised dealers. In May 1999 a new display-case was inaugurated in the Museum, exhibiting the most notable of new acquisitions, representing all the historical periods (FIG. 2).

SPECIMENS OF NEW ACQUISITIONS

- A gold 1/3 stater of Nicocles 373-361 BC
Kingdom of Salamis.
Obv. Head of Aphrodite.
- A bezant made of electrum of the first Lusignan King,
Guy de Lusignan 1192-1194.
Rev. King standing.
- A gros petit in silver of the last Lusignan king,
James II 1460-1473
Obv. Head of the king in profile.

THE CONSTANT UPGRADING OF THE MUSEUM DOCUMENTATION IS ANOTHER OBJECTIVE

During the last five years we passed from a manual to an electronic documentation. Here are some examples of electronic data cards:

The identification card bears at the top the code no. of the specimen and a picture introduced through a scanning process. Below is marked its exhibition no. in the museum and its classification according to the historical period, the mint, the issue authority, denomination, material, diameter, weight, axis, chronology references and notes. On the right appear the different possibilities of data cards where any selection can be transferred. For example the DESCR gives a description card, the PRINT a complete data card, or the PHOTO a card from the photographic collection.

LINKS: This card provides a detailed classification based on the presentations of the coins, i.e. gods, portraits, plants, birds symbols, etc.

Three types of cards permit a selection of coins with brief or detailed descriptions. There are different possibilities of selection, according to the issue authority, the denomination, the mint, the material etc.

Communication with the public and the expansion of the effectiveness of this communication is an important goal. The coin is not a specimen only for the specialists but it can provide a broad spectrum of information on history, economy, social life, religion, art etc. Our aim is to make our collection intelligible, interesting and attractive to all visitors. This task we believe, is achieved through the way objects are displayed (cases), the educational programmes and other cultural activities such as the public lectures.

Lectures have been given by authorities in numismatics:

Dr. Metcalf gave a lecture on medieval coins, Dr Amandry on roman coins, Dr. Manto Economides and Dr. Ioannis Touratsoglou on ancient coins.

The last lecture given by Ioannis Kypri, the President of the Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation, was the first of a series of lectures addressed to a broad public. It was entitled *The Hellenisation of Cyprus through the History of the Cypriot City-Kingdoms and their Coinage*.

The educational programme entitled *Getting to know the History of Cyprus through its Coins* is a main and constant activity of the Museum. It consists of two parts: the first is entitled *Ancient Cypriot Coins from Evelthon to the successors of Alexander the Great* and the second *Byzantine and Medieval Coins of Cyprus*. The two programmes are addressed to primary school pupils and are under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Both follow the same procedure:

- The children are introduced to the subject, in an informal manner combining teaching material and discussion.
- After a short break they complete their workbook in the Museum by searching for the coins in the display-cases. They are asked to describe, to draw or to choose the correct answer.
- After finishing their tour they are gathered round for the third and last part of the programme, where there is a discussion during which they compare modern coins with the ancient ones regarding, the material used, the iconography and so on.
- Small souvenirs, like notebooks and rulers, are given to the children when they leave. The programme is developed in an informal, creative and pleasant way.

A CD-ROM is now under preparation which is addressed to children of nine to fourteen years of age. It is a game through which children learn the

history of the island by searching the coins. Guided tours are offered to the public and to other specialised groups from Cyprus and abroad.

Among the publications of the Museum are:

- A Greek and English catalogue of the Museum providing detailed descriptions of each coin.
- Publications of the lectures given.
- Catalogues covering the exhibitions of the collection in Athens and in Paris.
- Post cards, notebooks etc.

FUTURE PLANS

Among our future plans are:

1. To invite scholars from Cyprus and abroad to give public lectures on Cypriot numismatics or on related subjects. All lectures will be eventually published in a corpus.
2. The publication of a most informative and illustrated catalogue of the Museum.
3. To prepare educational programmes for older children.
4. To organise seminars and lectures for college and university students.
5. To launch research projects on all aspects of Cypriot numismatics in cooperation with scholars from Cyprus and abroad.

The Museum of the History of Cypriot Coinage was amongst 68 other European Museums who were candidates for the European Museum of the Year Award for 1997 and it was included in the final list.



FIG 1. *Arrangement inside the display cases.*



FIG 2. *New display-case exhibiting the most notable of new acquisitions.*